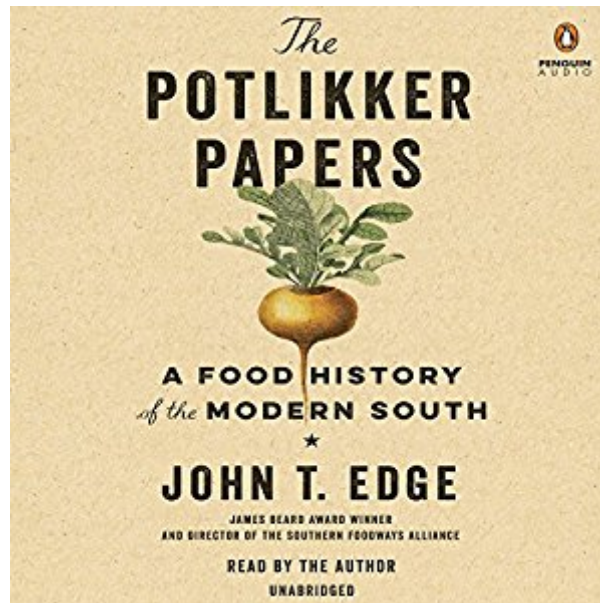




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# The Potlikker Papers: A Food History Of The Modern South



## Synopsis

A people's history of Southern food that reveals how the region came to be at the forefront of American culinary culture and how issues of race have shaped Southern cuisine over the last six decades. The Potlikker Papers tells the story of food and politics in the South over the last half century. Beginning with the pivotal role of cooks in the Civil Rights movement, noted authority John T. Edge narrates the South's journey from racist backwater to a hotbed of American immigration. In so doing, he traces how the food of the poorest Southerners has become the signature trend of modern American haute cuisine. This is a people's history of the modern South told through the lens of food. Food was a battleground in the civil rights movement. Access to food and ownership of culinary tradition was a central part of the long march to racial equality. The Potlikker Papers begins in 1955 as black cooks and maids fed and supported the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and it concludes in 2015 as a Newer South came to be, enriched by the arrival of immigrants from Lebanon to Vietnam to all points in between. Along the way The Potlikker Papers tracks many different evolutions of Southern identity - first in the 1970s, from the back-to-the-land movement that began in the Tennessee hills to the rise of fast and convenience foods modeled on Southern staples. Edge narrates the gentrification that gained traction in North Carolina and Louisiana restaurants of the 1980s and the artisanal renaissance that reconnected farmers and cooks in the 1990s and in the 2000s. He profiles some of the most extraordinary and fascinating figures in Southern food, including Fannie Lou Hamer, Colonel Sanders, Edna Lewis, Paul Prudhomme, Craig Claiborne, Sean Brock, and many others. Like many great provincial dishes around the world, potlikker is a salvage food. During the antebellum era, masters ate the greens from the pot and set aside the leftover potlikker broth for their slaves, unaware that the broth, not the greens, was nutrient-rich. After slavery, potlikker sustained the working poor, black and white. In the rapidly gentrifying South of today, potlikker has taken on new meanings as chefs have reclaimed the dish. Over the last two generations, wrenching changes have transformed the South. The Potlikker Papers tells the story of that change - and reveals how Southern food has become a shared culinary language for the nation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is sort of like a gumbo where each individual part is tasty, but just does not come together as a whole. It reads as if there is one, smaller BOOK which wants to come out of it (the beginning and the end, which is a history of the relationship of racism and industrialization of food production, and this part would hold together as an excellent, informative, much needed book), and a series of essays on Southern food, that don't really seem to relate to each other - sort of like a symposium in a journal, or something like that. The materials are all interesting, it's just very easy to stop, anywhere, and not feel like you're compelled to go forward, by what you've already read. Also, and people may disagree with this, to this reader, there is a problem with "sourcing." No footnotes. Everything is documented, at the end, in a "notes to pages x-y" sort of format, but this makes it very difficult to know WHEN the author is leading you to a primary source or not, because there's nothing up front. I would have preferred numbered footnotes, or some other way of knowing what is the author's, and what is coming from another source. It's worth reading, but it could have been much better.

Terrific historical, informative background on Southern food, people. Gave copies to friends as gifts.

Interesting book. It's a mix of Southern culture, food & social history, and pop culture. Well written and easy to read. Highly recommend

I have mixed feelings about this book. I had no idea who the author is, but having relocated to the south I thought this would be an interesting read and it is. The positive: I had never heard of Georgia Gilmore, whose cooking was so important at the beginning of the civil rights movement. The book continues on through decades of chefs and restaurant owners and the ascent of "southern cooking", while also discussing the terrible working conditions of migrant farm workers and

their struggle for better working conditions. Finally ending up with the "new south" which is blending/changing southern cuisine to include variety from Mexico, Korea, Vietnam and their cultural influences and blending with southern dishes. So I did learn quite a bit. This is a VERY brief review and doesn't convey the depth of the subjects I've touched upon. I learned a great deal. The not so positive: The author talks quite a bit about industrialized food, and seems to me to think that every American can be fed by gardens and local farms. I agree that local fresh is best but I can't afford that choice. Even though the author discusses lack of food/nutrition/poverty in his book doesn't he realize it still exists? Not every American can afford fresh organic and no matter how much you hope millions and millions of people would not be able to eat without cheaper industrialized food. I didn't really need to read a book to let me know that every immigrant group that has settled in the USA that their culture influences food. Duh. That's my opinion. I had never heard of the southern foodways alliance and to find out more about it I checked it out online. After reading this book and the author's specific reasoning for the choice of the group's logo for the southern foodways alliance I was surprised to find out that the staff and BOD are almost all white. Huh. I figured since the whites had suppressed black cooks, farmers and restaurateurs for so long that the food alliance would be more integrated. I also didn't care for the comment that FINALLY the NYT hired A MAN for the food section, thereby giving it gravitas. I guess women weren't any good at it? or perhaps it was part of the newspaper culture / chauvinism at the time which repressed female journalists and they weren't given the opportunity to write as they would like? I definitely recommend reading this book if you'd like to learn a different aspect of the civil rights movement, the evolution of southern cooking and how it's morphing. Perhaps the couple of points I mentioned won't bother you as they did me.

Excellent

Very interesting and informative, especially for a native cracker like me.

The book is a record of southern food presented in a historical/cultural framework covering the period of 1955 through 2015. The author is successful in weaving the two subjects together and while not a light read, the writing is skillful and the book contents extensively researched. Unlike some food history books that sprinkle recipes throughout as a way of illuminating the text, none are included here. But, if interested in the subject matter, it is easy to become fully absorbed in the stories that provide both cultural context along with detailing the integral role food played during the

time period. The book is divided into five sections. The first is Freedom Struggles 1950s and 1960s which includes four chapters "Kitchen Tables, Restaurant Theaters, Poor Power and Black Power. The second section is Rise of the Folk 1970s and 1980s. The four chapters are Landed Hippies, Faster Food, Carter Country and Black Pastorals. The third section is Gentrification 1980s and 1990s. Five chapters comprise the section including Kingmaker and Kings, Generation Grits, Cooking School, Artisanal Pantry and Restaurant Renaissance. The fourth section is New Respect 2000s and 2010s which has one chapter "Pits and Pitmasters. The final section is Future Tenses 2010s Forward which includes three chapters "Political Reckoning, Nuevo Sud and Shared Palates: An Afterword. The book also contains a roughly a 39 page section of Notes along with a five page Deeper Reading Bibliography for further exploration. A meticulous work and solid resource.

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